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Research and Experiment in Rural Education

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J. P. Naik

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION: GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

1953

STUDIES IN EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENT

IN

RURAL EDUCATION

By



सत्यमेव जयते

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FOREWORD

This brochure is a powerful and well reasoned plea for giving a new and fair deal to Rural Education in India and deserves the serious attention of all educationists and educational authorities in the country. It traces lucidly the socio-political causes which have been responsible for the neglect in which rural education has languished during the last so many decades, discusses its true objectives and makes useful suggestions for realizing them in practice. It rightly stresses the fact that the traditional hit-and-miss policy in the field of education should be abandoned, that educational problems—which involve so many subjective and objective factors and which impinge so dynamically on every aspect of our life—should be regarded as at least as worthy of serious study and research as problems in science and technology in which the need for research has now come to be generally recognized. It is stupid to imagine that primary education is synonymous with the teaching of a few subjects to little children which any person with a small modicum of education can do well enough. It is equally dangerous to assume that problems of administration, curricula, methods, text books etc. at various educational levels have been satisfactorily solved and the educational authorities possess the necessary data and knowledge to deal with them. The whole of this field is largely unexplored territory and, if our education is to become an effective force in the re-shaping of the national life and character and the raising of our standards of efficiency, intelligent thought must be applied systematically to their study and the Universities and Training Colleges must play their full part in it.

The problem has become more important still in recent years for a variety of reasons. We are launched on a great experiment in democracy which depends for its success on the proper education of the masses and the raising of their material and cultural standards. This gives a special significance and urgency to the reorientation of rural education. By its sheer magnitude, its effect, for good or evil, on the future of the country is incalculable. Again, as this study points out, rural education is no longer to be identified with primary education but must take within its purview secondary and higher education also which are almost new fields for experimentation and research. We can lay their foundations

right more easily at this stage, because there is not much of the inertia of established institutions and practices to overcome. Moreover, we are, today, on the verge of a movement for educational expansion, particularly at the primary level. The recent decision of the Government of India to absorb about a lakh of educated young men and women in primary schools to be newly started—as a measure to relieve unemployment amongst the educated classes—offers a great challenge to educationists. These young persons will be working mainly in rural areas and in one-teacher schools. What they teach and how they teach and how they set about this whole business of education will have an almost immediate impact on about 25 lakhs of children and, within the next few years, the number may be more than doubled. A sobering thought ! If this great expansion of educational provision is to prove a genuine blessing for the children and the countryside, our Universities, Training Colleges, Departments of Education and all serious students of education interested in this field should devote careful thought to the developing of rural education on right lines. They should work out, experimentally, methods and techniques of teaching and organization, as well as curricula and text-books that will help the average, often raw, new teacher to function efficiently.

I am happy that this brochure—prepared by Mr. J. P. Naik who has given decades of patient and devoted study to this field of education—is being brought out at such an opportune moment. I hope it will strike sparks of critical thinking and constructive effort amongst all educational workers concerned.

K. G. Saiyidain

CHAPTER I

The State of Rural Education in India

In a country like India where about 87 per cent of the people live in villages, the problem of rural education ought to have been regarded as the problem of problems and have received the most careful attention at the hands of her educationists and administrators. Unfortunately, this problem was largely neglected under British rule and has come in for attention only very recently.

The modern system of education created by British administrators began in State Capitals and slowly descended, first to district headquarters, then to *taluka* or *tehsil* headquarters, and finally to big or easily accessible villages. Even today the majority of villages in India are untouched by the modern system of education and it has not yet been possible to provide them with even a primary school, however humble. Moreover, even the educational institutions which exist in rural areas are hardly planned to meet rural needs and are rarely in harmony with rural environment. The modern school in India—primary or secondary—was first evolved in towns as a means of educating a class in society on the model of the precedents from an urban country like Britain. It has therefore a distinctly urban character and a bias towards the needs and capacities of a small minority of the people whose loyalties the foreign rulers were interested in annexing. Obviously, this model was unsuited to the needs of the masses and to the conditions of life in rural areas. And yet, when the pressure of awakening public opinion demanded the extension of education to rural area, the urban school was just transplanted into the new environment without any attempt to study rural conditions or to modify the school curricula and teaching methods so as to suit the rural way of life.

What is worse, this *rurban** school was required to perform an almost impossible task. Its work continued to be judged by urban standards and by comparison with urban schools which still dominated the scene. But its resources were far too meagre. Owing to a smaller enrolment and the greater poverty

* I am borrowing this word "rurban" from American phraseology and using it to denote a typically urban institution planted in a rural setting without any change in its intrinsic character.

of parents, its income from fees or other local sources was poor; but it generally received the same grant from public funds as its urban counterpart. Its staff was generally less qualified, because the remuneration offered was small and the scope for private tuitions was incomparably smaller in rural areas. At the same time the villages do not provide even the basic amenities of life, and the lure of the towns is still strong with the Indian intelligentsia. Its students generally fared poorly in comparison with urban boys and girls, for they came from a less academic environment; tuition was poorer; the innumerable educative agencies outside the school which influence an urban child are almost totally absent in a typical rural setting where "Tuesday comes because Monday is gone and Wednesday is not due till tomorrow".

It is, therefore, not to be wondered at if this rural school with its less advanced pupils and more meagre resources in men and money generally cuts a sorry figure in comparison with urban schools. In fact, it would not be incorrect to say that today, rural education is either non-existent or it is an urban education executed inefficiently.

Causes of Neglect

General.—The causes of this neglect of rural education and its low status are not far to seek. Probably the most important factor that contributed to this end was the neglect of rural areas and rural life as a whole which was so typical a characteristic of the British administration. England is an essentially urban and industrial country and it is not a matter for surprise if the average Englishman displays an unawareness of the special needs of a rural community. Secondly, the British administration was a highly centralized machine—it had to be so in order to conquer India and to continue to maintain its authority. Consequently, social and educational developments under British rule were confined mostly to those few centres where administrative authority was concentrated and especially to those where British officials had to live. Thus, the British paid the greatest attention to the imperial and state capitals—the homes of Viceroys and Governors, and the biggest centres of the European population. Then, came the district headquarters where Collectors lived and where typical Anglo-Indian suburbs grew up round the Collectors' bungalows and to which the new "upper classes",

created under British rule, were attracted in large numbers. Finally, some money was assigned to the *taluka* or *tehsil* headquarters because it was through them that the outlying areas were governed. But the villages which formed the periphery of the body politic were generally neglected and the extent of this neglect was directly proportionate to their distance from the centres of authority. In fact, the whole constitution of British administration was so urban in outlook and so centralized in organisation that the neglect of rural areas became inevitable under it.

Neglect is always bad; but even neglect would have been preferable to destruction. What unfortunately occurred under British rule was that certain good features of pre-British village life were unwittingly destroyed. Prior to the advent of British rule, Indian villages had a kind of political autarchy and were able to meet their local needs. The feudal powers of the period, small or big, generally contented themselves with the levy of a small central tax, and once it was paid, usually allowed the village community to live in peace and to develop on its own lines.

Secondly, the rural economy of that period was simple and every village produced mainly for local consumption and was, on the whole, fairly well provided with the basic necessities of life. But British rule changed this picture radically. Its new and centralized administration destroyed the autarchy of the village and the traditional institutions of self-government, without creating other and better agencies in their stead. The Industrial Revolution that came in the wake of British rule destroyed the age-old cottage industries and started an economic exploitation which made the villages poorer and poorer as the years rolled by. The national economy which British capitalism sought to develop in India destroyed the old system of regional self-sufficiency, created the tradition of producing for a market rather than for local consumption, and ended in exploiting the village still further.

This growing poverty of the villages and the destruction of the indigenous institutions organised for community action in local welfare divested rural life of its basic amenities and rendered it incapable of providing economic openings for its abler citizens. This, in its turn, created an exodus from the villages to the cities and towns where wealth and industry was being rapidly centralized, and where the

basic amenities of life were being gradually provided. All sorts of persons now began to migrate from the villages to the cities and towns. The rich went there, because they could enjoy their wealth better in urban areas or because they could increase it more rapidly in urban surroundings. The well-intentioned went there to give a good education to their children. The talented went there in search of a good job in a government or commercial office. The Harijans migrated in large numbers because they could get better employment in the ever-growing conservancy sections of municipalities, and because the rigours of social ostracism were felt less keenly in urban than in rural ones. The needy went there in search of means to live. Such diversity of incentives increased the exodus from villages to cities very considerably and soon a vicious circle was set up. The drabness and hardships of rural life and its failure to provide adequate economic openings led to the mass migration of a large percentage of the talented and able population of rural areas and this exodus, in its turn, added to the drabness, hardships and poverty of rural life and made the task of reconstruction more difficult.

Causes of Neglect

Education: The foregoing discussion shows the social, political and economic causes of the neglect of rural life during the British period. It is necessary to take note of these causes and even to stress them because unless they are completely removed, it is not possible to achieve any worthwhile results in rural reconstruction. But while dealing with the problems of rural education, it is also necessary to examine in detail one special aspect of the question, viz., the errors of commission and omission on the part of educational administrators which have resulted in the general neglect of rural education and its problems. As educationists, we are intensely interested in this issue, and unless we can correctly diagnose the causes of our failure in the past, it will not be possible for us to plan our programme for future reconstruction with accuracy and confidence.

To begin with, the fundamental error in our educational administration has been that the problems of rural education were never tackled by the universities or by other agencies—public or private—which functioned at university level. No problem can be scientifically and thoroughly studied unless

and until it has been taken up and investigated at the post-graduate level. This is especially true of a complicated problem like rural education. If the Government desired to evolve a good system of education suited to the rural area and to extend it to most, if not all, of the villages, it was necessary to examine several intricate problems such as rural sociology, characteristics of a rural pattern of life, determination of the objectives and methods of rural reconstruction, the evolution of curricula suited to rural environment; the training of a rural leadership especially suitable for the contemplated task of rural reconstruction; the techniques likely to be most effective in rural education, and especially in such problems as the co-ordination of school work with the life of the community, the special problems connected with the training of teachers for rural areas and so on. If justice were to be done to these far-reaching and complicated issues, and if an educational system based on a careful and scientific study of these problems were to be evolved, it was obviously necessary to open several research and experimental centres, functioning at the post-graduate level, in rural areas. These centres ought to have been staffed by highly qualified research workers and, under their supervision, research and experimental work on problems like the above ought to have been organised on as large a scale as possible.

One naturally expects that the lead in this matter should come from the universities on whom falls the ultimate responsibility of investigating problems facing the country and of training personnel to solve them. But for reasons that are well-known, our universities did not organise any educational research prior to 1917-19. Then came the Report of the Calcutta University Commission which put forward, for the first time, an impassioned plea for the creation of University Departments of Education where problems of education in general and of mass education in particular (these eventually boil down to problems of rural education) would be investigated. It said:

“(a) *University departments of Education* : Systematic study of educational questions is admittedly much needed in India at the present time. Far-reaching changes are apparently imminent, not least in the sphere of primary education, but very little has been done to prepare for these changes by

systematic enquiry or experiment. Yet the conditions are favourable for setting such enquiries on foot and for instituting experiments in new methods of teaching and of school-organisation. In many provinces, and not least in Bengal, there is a widespread and growing interest in education and a conviction of its fundamental importance to the community. What is to be desired is that there should be a number of vigorous and independent centres of educational thought in India, closely in touch with the scientific progress which is being made in the subject elsewhere, intimate with the special needs of India and with the conditions under which those needs must be met, and well equipped with the means of practical experiment. Such centres should be found in the teaching universities, of which the departments of education, if strongly staffed and well-organised, would in a comparatively short time produce work of great value and exert great influence upon public opinion....."

(b) *Demonstration Schools*: "We think it very desirable that.....there should be a demonstration school under the direction of the university professor for the practical trial of new methods of teaching, new combinations of school subjects and new plans of school organisation. Such a school must be relatively small in order to allow experimental work to be done at the director's discretion. The forms of its organisation should be determined by the professor at the head of the department, who should have the assistance of a staff of teachers chosen by himself. A small school of this type is the laboratory of a professor of education. Its great value is proved by the results of the work done in the University school at Chicago under Professor John Dewey, in the school at Jena under Professor Rein and in the Fielden Demonstration School at Manchester under Professor Findlay. It is not in the ordinary sense of the word a practising school, since the latter must, in order to give the necessary experience to students in training, follow the main lines of the organisation normally found in the schools in which the students will afterwards be professionally employed. It is a school of free experiment and as such is valuable as a stimulus and guide to students in training, though designed not as a model to show the best that can be done under normal conditions but as a place in which at the discretion of its director new experiments can be tried."*

* Report, pp. 74—84.

In spite of this great plea, the actual work turned out cannot, however, be regarded as satisfactory, whether in quality or in quantity, especially in view of the fact that more than 30 years have passed since the Report was first published and its recommendations universally accepted. Even to-day, only a few Indian Universities have Departments of Education. Their work is mostly restricted to the training of teachers and they do very little research and next to nothing of the systematic enquiry into problems of Indian education to which the Calcutta University Commission made so pointed a reference. Consequently, their influence upon public opinion or administrative policies has been small. What is worse, they are all urban in location and outlook and no University Department of Education has yet undertaken any research and experimental work in rural education or started any demonstration schools in rural areas. In fact, it would indeed be a truism to say that our universities are not yet alive to the importance of the problems of rural education and the extreme urgency of investigating them at the post-graduate level.

This failure of the universities could have been atoned for if research and experimental centres in rural areas had been started either by State Departments of Education or by private enterprise. But this was not done. Our State Departments of Education have not yet realised the importance of fostering such research and experiment. The British officials used to look for guidance or new ideas not to original research or experiments carried out in India, but to the practice and precedents of European countries, especially England. They implicitly accepted the hypothesis that the principles and practice of education as evolved in England could easily be adapted to Indian conditions and that India could do no better than try to be a "lesser England"! Later on, British officials disappeared but this tradition outlived them. In fact, it is not quite dead yet, and there is even a danger that it may rise from its grave in a new form and replace the old passion to imitate England by the new passion to imitate America! Be that as it may, it is certain that the value of original research and experiment has been realised by our Education Departments only in recent years, that the initial attempts in this direction (following another tradition of

British rule) are as yet largely confined to urban areas, and that Departments of Education have not yet thought earnestly of the problems of research in rural education.

What is true of Departments of Education is also true of private enterprise in education. This grew mainly in the shadow of cities and towns for three good reasons: the keen demand for its services that existed in the urban areas on account of the relatively greater awakening among the public, the larger financial support that it could obtain from urban centres; and the natural desire of the teachers who worked in private institutions to stay, as far as possible, in towns and cities only. In the rural areas, the general conditions were, and still are, far from favourable to the growth of private enterprise at a higher level. There is no local talent available to organise it; the local public is uneducated and is in consequence likely to be indifferent or even hostile to such enterprise; financial support is meagre because of local poverty; and competent persons from cities are unwilling to go to villages. Under such circumstances, private enterprise in rural areas is generally that of the individual primary teacher, who runs a sort of aided school in places where Government or Board schools do not exist. His qualifications and capacity are not even equal to those of primary teachers in public schools and it is idle to expect him to make any contribution to the study of rural education as a problem.

Private enterprise at the secondary level has only recently entered the rural field and at the collegiate level it has yet to start. It may, therefore, be said that Indian private enterprise has not yet seriously addressed itself to the study of problems in rural education and that it is still largely occupied in serving its chief patron—the middle and upper classes from cities and towns. It is true that there are some notable exceptions to this rule. Missionaries have done much pioneering work in this field; and there is the grand experiment at Sriniketan where Tagore tried to study conjointly the problems of rural education and rural reconstruction. But such exceptions are so few that they do not disprove the general statement made above.

The second fundamental error of our educational administration that has contributed to the neglect of rural education so far is this. Our Education Departments have

generally proceeded on the assumption that what is good for urban is also good for rural areas, and that no fundamental differentiation need be made between urban and rural education. When this assumption was challenged and a case was made out for the differentiation of courses between urban and rural centres, the Departments adopted wrong principles of differentiation, so that the idea of evolving a system of education specially suited to rural areas soon came to grief, and the earlier assumption that identical provision in education should be made for urban and rural areas came to hold the field.

A brief reference to modern educational history will clarify this issue. As stated already, the modern educational institutions—primary, secondary and collegiate—began first in cities and towns. There was never any question of transferring collegiate institutions to rural areas—the idea of a rural university was born as late as 1949—but no one even believed that secondary schools could be “rural”. The problem of differentiation was therefore considered relevant only at the primary stage and even so, most States contented themselves with extending the urban primary school to rural areas without making any changes whatsoever. Prior to 1901-02, it was only in two States—Bombay and Madhya Pradesh—that some attempt was made to differentiate between the syllabuses of urban and rural primary schools. In 1877-78, Bombay started a four-year course for rural primary schools (called “Modi” standards, because the Modi script of the Devanagari alphabet was taught in them) on the assumption that children in rural areas need a shorter course and similar curriculum than children in urban areas. Later on, an infants’ class was added at the bottom of this course and the fifth standard at the top. Even so, it was much shorter than the urban course that was spread over eight years (Infants’ class *plus* seven standards). In 1901-02, the Director of Public Instruction, Bombay, compared the two courses in the following words:

“As compared with this (*i.e.* general course) the boy who takes the Modi or rural standards learns only the more practically useful rules of Arithmetic, entirely omitting Decimal Fractions, nor does he learn any Euclid. He learns only those branches of account and book-keeping which he will actually need in later life. The technical terms used in

formal documents are rendered familiar in his reading books. He can write simple reports in Modi and read fluently from miscellaneous files in a *Mamlatdar's* office. His knowledge of History is limited to his Province, and his knowledge of Geography to India. He has been given also some idea of rudimentary science and sanitation. The scope of this course is thus severely utilitarian; but it is hoped that the introduction of object lessons and simple drawing will tend to relieve the monotony of the curriculum.”*

The Madhya Pradesh experiment was based on broader and better principles. The officials found that the departmental primary schools were not popular with the village people. This unpopularity was ascribed to three causes. The children of agriculturists could not afford to attend schools on a full-time basis as they had to work for their families—a situation which made the primary curriculum a burden on students and resulted in much stagnation and waste. Secondly, the existing curriculum was too literary and unsuited to the needs of agriculturists who formed the bulk of the rural population. And thirdly, the villagers were extremely conservative and so attached to the curricula and methods of teaching current in the traditional indigenous schools that they entirely disapproved of the new syllabus and techniques adopted in Government schools, which they regarded as “new-fangled”. Hence the rural schools in Madhya Pradesh adopted a simpler curriculum that was prepared on the assumption that the average child would attend the school for half the day only. Secondly, they tried to cater mainly for the needs of agriculturists, although the interests of the non-agriculturists were not entirely overlooked in their programme. And lastly, they tried to adopt the golden mean between old and new methods of teaching.

This is not the place to describe the working of these schools in detail. The interested student will get all the data in the report on *Rural Schools in the Central Provinces* written by Mr. H. Sharp and published by the Central Bureau of Education, as *Occasional Report No. 1* (1904). But the following passage by Mr. H. W. Orange, the then Director-General of Education in India, will give a broad idea of the scheme.

* Report, pp. 42-3.

"The system (which Mr. Sharp describes) may be regarded as the treatment of our most momentous problem in its most perplexing form. Those who are familiar with the movement in other countries towards making the course of instruction in rural schools more 'practical', will recognise the similarity of the lines on which the rural school in the Central Provinces has been developed; the half-time school, so designed as to allow the children to work in the fields during the rest of the day; the modification of the curriculum to suit their requirements, and also to adapt the school to the needs of the majority who are not agriculturists; the school gardens; the lessons on village records, practically illustrated in the fields; the training of the teachers on a farm; and the lessons on 'agriculture' given in the village school, with the limits within which such lessons can be useful. Valuable as farm training is for primary teachers, in order to turn their eyes on to the external world, and induce them to base their lessons in the village school upon common things familiar to the children, it does not pretend to aim at reforming agricultural practice. The object of the village school is to make the children 'observers, thinkers, experimenters' in however humble a degree; it is not an agency for teaching the agricultural population how to conduct their business.....

"The system has its distinguishing characteristics and these may be worth the study, without assuming that they are necessarily superior to other ways of dealings with the same question, nor that will certainly succeed in another soil. The half-time school has been tried elsewhere, but not hitherto with equally good results; the distinct rural curriculum is a feature not found in all provincial systems; the school Committee which appears on the whole to succeed in giving the villagers an interest in their school without exciting them to undue interference, is worth the attention of those who are considering its extension; *eshi Kasrat* is already attaining popularity in other provinces which have not already their own varieties of physical exercises. The solidity and brightness of the school premises which are often the best kept buildings in the village, are also a characteristic in which the Central Provinces differ from others where primary education is more widely diffused."

“But in its intermixture of English and native methods, here an indigenous tradition utilised, there an English form super-imposed, the system is typical of primary schools, and indeed of the whole educational fabric, throughout India. It is an intermixture requiring great skill and care in its detailed adjustments, so as neither to perpetuate the native routine of antiquity, nor to bewilder the simple countryman with demands for ‘Socratic and Pestalozzic methods’, but to produce an adaptation which the villager can understand, and the Englishmen approve.”*

It is easy to see that neither the Bombay nor the Madhya Pradesh experiments of rural primary schools were based on sound principles. The objectives in rural education would be discussed later; but it will readily be granted that none of the ideals underlying these courses would find acceptance at present. Both these experiments were really more like short-range expedients designed to overcome an immediate difficulty, viz., the unpopularity of the modern primary course among the village people, rather than like a planned solution of the problem on a long-term basis. What is more, they generally fell between two stools and in trying to please the orthodox villager on the one hand and the fastidious educationist on the other, they succeeded in pleasing none. In Bombay, the Modi standards were never popular with the Department and in most cases, even the villagers chose the urban syllabus for the rural course and insisted on the adoption of the former in their local school. In Madhya Pradesh also, a similar experience was obtained and Mr. Sharp observed that “the rural school, established out of nothing, and in the teeth of opposition, itself had to create the want that it was destined to fulfil.”†

This is how matters stood at the beginning of the present century, when Lord Curzon began his comprehensive and vigorous drive for educational reform. In his Resolution on Educational Policy dated March 11, 1904, he specifically directed that the syllabus of rural primary schools should be differentiated from that of the urban schools. He said: “The instruction of the masses in such subjects as will best fit them

* Rural Schools in Central Provinces, pp. ii-iv.

† *Ibid*, pp. i-ii.

for their position in life, involves some differentiation in the courses for rural schools, especially in connection with the attempts which are being made to connect primary teaching with familiar objects. In Bombay a separate course of instruction, with standards of its own, is prescribed. In the Central Provinces a system of half-time schools has been successfully established, providing simple courses of instruction in the mornings* for the children of agriculturists, who work in the fields during the rest of the day. This system seems worthy of imitation elsewhere; at present a similar experiment made in the Punjab has met with less success. The aim of the rural schools should be not to impart definite agricultural teaching, but to give to the children a preliminary training which will make them intelligent cultivators, will train them to be observers, thinkers and experimenters in however humble a manner, and will protect them in their business transactions with the landlords to whom they pay rent and the grain-dealers to whom they dispose of their crops. The reading books prescribed should be written in simple language, not in unfamiliar literary style, and should deal with topics associated with rural life. The grammar taught should be elementary, and only the native system of arithmetic should be used. The village map should be thoroughly understood; and a very useful course of instruction may be given in the accountant's papers, enabling every boy before leaving school to master the intricacies of the village accounts and to understand the demands that may be made upon the cultivator. The Government of India regard it as a matter of the greatest importance to provide a simple, suitable and useful type of school for the agriculturist, and to foster the demand for it among the population.”*

It was hardly possible to withstand so firm an order from the imperious Viceroy and hence, the attempts to differentiate rural primary curricula from the urban were revived with great vigour and the progress made during the next three years is thus described by the *Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in India* (1902-07): “Every province in which the teachers are told to base their instruction upon objects familiar to the children and are given some freedom in constructing the curriculum may be said to provide the

* Para. 21.

frame-work for differentiating between urban and rural primary schools. Only four provinces, viz., Bombay, Bengal, the Punjab and the Central Provinces, prescribe differences in the curriculum according as the school is rural or urban. There are different ways of making the distinction. Bombay provides for the rural schools a smaller range of subjects than for the urban, and easier standards; Bengal provides the same curriculum and the same standards for both kinds of school, with the sole difference that in the scientific readers used in rural schools the parts relating to physics and chemistry are replaced by parts relating to agriculture; in the Punjab there is a difference in curriculum, viz., omission of Persian, a difference of syllabus, viz., the teaching of arithmetic by native methods, a difference of standard in geography and a difference in language of the reading books, Punjabi being admissible instead of, or in addition to, Urdu. In the Central Provinces, the main difference is that the rural curriculum is for half-timers, the theory being that the children can assist in agricultural operations during the other half of the day; but there is also a difference in the subjects studied, for the rural curriculum consists of the following compulsory subjects: reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and agriculture, besides a little drawing of geometrical forms and physical exercises. The same subjects are compulsory in the urban curriculum but history, freehand drawing or grammar is added. To the extent to which the two curricula coincide, the standards are identical. In Bombay, the schools for agriculturists with the lower standards are institutions distinct from the schools with the higher standards. In the Punjab, all schools outside the largest cities are likely to adopt the rural curriculum. In the Central Provinces, half-timers and full-timers attend the same institutions, and the two curricula are taught in the same school."

Curzon left India in 1905 and with him disappeared the stress on the differentiation of primary curricula for urban and rural schools. The departmental officials who were none too enthusiastic about the experiment soon succeeded in revising the orders and as early as 1913, the Government Resolution on educational policy laid down a contrary principle. It said:

"It is not practicable at present in most parts of India to draw any great distinction between the curricula of rural

and urban primary schools. But in the latter class of schools there is special scope for the practical teaching of geography, school excursions, etc., and the nature of the study should vary with the environment, and some other form of simple knowledge of the locality might advantageously be substituted for the study of the village map. As competent teachers become available a greater differentiation in the course will be possible.”*

In the following decade, therefore, the principle of differentiation was continually on the decline. The rural standards of Bombay were finally abolished in 1916-17 on the following grounds, amongst others.

(a) The rural course was disliked because a boy who completed it did not become qualified for appointment under the Government while a boy who completed the general primary course did so.

(b) Although the rural course was designed to meet the demand of the village people, the gradual change of public opinion in rural areas made the villagers themselves oppose it on the ground that it was a sign of backwardness in education. By 1880, when the course was first introduced, the average villager did not want the new-fangled education in Government schools, but by 1917, he was not prepared to accept anything less than was given to his fellow citizens in urban areas. The very basis of the rural course had therefore disappeared owing to this change in rural public opinion.

(c) The desire to study English was spreading to rural areas and, as the boys who had studied the rural course were at a handicap in a secondary school, which was mostly attended by those who had completed the general course, the tendency of village parents to send their children to the special rural schools greatly declined in the early years of the 20th century. The number of schools teaching the rural course therefore went on decreasing so fast that it was not worthwhile to continue the system any longer.

A similar tale was repeated in most Provinces where Curzon's idea was adopted and as early as 1916-17, it was reported that “the difference between curricula for rural and

* Para. II (iv).

for urban schools are slight and tend to disappear. The main difference now consists in the subject offered for observation lessons.”* Curzon’s idea was really the first attempt to adapt the teaching in rural schools to their environment. But quite unable to work out the concept, the Department gave it up within less than 15 years of its first appearance. In fact, they now began to argue that Curzon’s ideas of rural needs did not coincide with the real needs of the rural people at all.

“It is often assumed that the education given in a village school is despised because it is not practical enough. In many cases, however, the parent’s objection is just the opposite. He has no desire to have his son taught agriculture, partly because he thinks he knows far more about that than the teacher, but still more because his ambition is that his boy should become a teacher or a clerk. The solution which is so frequently put forward of popularising schools by adapting rural education to rural needs has little or no meaning in the absence of an agreement as to rural needs between the rustic and the reformer. The reformer has in mind the introduction of utilitarian studies such as agriculture into the village school course. The rustic sends his child to school to learn to read and write. He has no doubt of the fact that the village *guru* knows less of agriculture than he does himself and what the boy needs in the matter of agricultural knowledge he can learn by work in the fields. It is a view altogether sensible ; and some sympathy may be felt for the parents in one backward area who went so far as to beat the *guru* for setting their boys to work in the school garden.”†

By 1921 therefore the Department practically ruled out the experiment of differentiating curricula; nor has it revived the attempt so far, although several revolutionary changes in primary education have been carried out or attempted during the last 30 years.

It will be seen from the foregoing account that no attempt was made in India to evolve a separate system of rural education at the secondary and collegiate level; that some experiments were tried at the primary stage with the object of differentiating courses between rural and urban schools; that

* Progress of Education in India (1912-17), Vol. I, p. 116.

† *Ibid* p. 122.

such experiments were neither well-planned nor tried on a sufficient scale; and that the general assumption of our educational administration has been that there is no need to differentiate between urban and rural schools and that what is good for the cities is also good for the villages. It is obvious that the study of rural education as a problem cannot be expected to be organised under such general policies.

The third fundamental error of our educational administration was to equate "rural" education with "primary" education. In the 19th century, it was pardonable to say so, because, at that time, the only educational institutions situated in rural areas were primary schools. But early in this century, the secondary school began to be extended to rural areas and now the rural secondary school has become a fairly common institution. Moreover, the Radhakrishnan Commission has envisaged a plan under which rural education becomes a complete entity within itself and has to be organized at all levels from the pre-primary to the post-graduate. But this concept is still at the stage of academic discussion and our administration has been working so far on the assumption that rural education is equivalent to primary education only.

This wrong view has had several unhappy consequences. It has, in the first instance, divorced rural education from the scope of university activities which begin at the post-matriculation or post-intermediate level. Secondly, it has given a strong but entirely unnecessary urban bias to all secondary education; and lastly, it has consigned rural education to the hands of the most poorly equipped group among our educationists. Unfortunately, the educational workers in India are divided into three broad and mutually impervious strata, viz. (1) the primary teachers and subordinate inspecting officers who deal with primary schools; (2) the secondary teachers and senior inspecting officers who deal with secondary schools; and (3) the lecturers and professors who work at the collegiate and post-graduate level. In a healthy educational system, such stratified groups should not exist at all. But when they did, the least that could be expected was that rural education should come within the scope of all these three groups. Owing, however, to the unfortunate identification of rural with primary education, it has not been handled by any but the least qualified of our educational workers. Efficiency

in education naturally varies with the quality of the personnel, and, hence, it cannot be a matter for surprise if problems of rural education have not been studied as yet.

The fourth fundamental error of our educational administration is the failure to produce a cadre of especially trained persons to work in rural education. This really follows as a corollary from the general decision to treat urban and rural education as identical, but its consequences are so far-reaching that it needs some special notice. Even assuming for a moment that the total content of a course—say, the primary—is the same for urban and rural areas, the striking differences that exist in the home-backgrounds of urban and rural children, in the environments to which all instruction had to be related in order to be effective, and in the regularity of attendance as between rural and urban centres do necessitate a differentiation in the grading of a given syllabus in rural and urban areas and in the teaching techniques to be adopted in urban and rural schools. For instance, lessons on natural history can and should come earlier in village schools, while those on scientific developments like trains, electricity, etc., may be taught much earlier in urban areas. Instruction in “Safety First” is indispensable in cities like Bombay but is hardly of any utility in remote villages. Instruction in civics in an urban area where sanitary services at a certain level of efficiency are expected to be provided by municipalities, is bound to be different in approach from that in rural areas where no local bodies exist, or may even be expected to exist in the near future; the single-teacher school is a typical problem of rural pedagogy that has no counterpart in urban education; and so on.

Further, it has to be noted that fundamental differences arise, not only in the grading of syllabus or teaching techniques as shown above, but also in several other fields. The problem of parent-teacher relationship, extra-curricular activities and school supervision—just to mention a few by way of illustration—require entirely different techniques in rural and urban areas. It therefore goes without saying that the training of teachers for rural areas has to be regarded as an important problem in itself and has to be differentiated materially from the training of urban teachers. A good deal of research and experiment has also to be done on it if the

standard of rural education is to be raised. But these truths have hardly been appreciated so far. Our training colleges for secondary teachers are all located in urban or at the most in semi-urban centres, and they hardly pay heed to the special needs of rural areas. In fact, we put all our teachers through a common grind (which is inevitably urban in character) and then send most of them out to rural areas to fare as best as they can. It is small wonder therefore if the average teacher in rural areas is soon disillusioned about the practical utility of the training he receives, and if he shows but little qualitative improvement in his work. In our failure to recognise the need for a differentiated and specialised training for rural teachers, we have deprived rural education of efficient personnel and adversely affected the status of rural education in comparison with the urban.

It is hardly necessary to continue this discussion further. The foregoing analysis has clearly shown that the problem of rural education has suffered in the past for several reasons, the chief among which are (1) the failure of universities, Education Departments, or private bodies to organise centres of research and experiment in rural areas; (2) the failure to differentiate between urban and rural education at any stage; (3) the wrong assumption that rural education is equivalent to the primary; and (4) the failure to provide well-planned training to rural teachers. This tale of modern educational history contains enough data through which ideas of reform in the future can be advantageously evolved.

CHAPTER II

PLANNING RURAL EDUCATION

Objectives and How to Realise Them

From this dark, but useful, picture of the past, let us turn to the future and discuss ways and means for organising the study of rural education as a problem and for raising its general status. Obviously, this will need a comprehensive, elaborate and long-range plan organised on a national basis. The principal object of this brochure therefore is to consider some important facets of such a plan and make a few practicable proposals for immediate action.

As will readily be granted, the first step in the preparation of a plan for the development of rural education is to define its objectives. This important task has hardly been attempted in the past. As shown in the preceding section, no separate objectives were ever defined for rural education at the secondary or higher level while, at the primary stage, the only objectives suggested were: (1) the simplification of curricula; (2) emphasizing those subjects and activities which have a direct utility in the life of a rural citizen, especially an agriculturist; and (3) effecting a compromise between the curricula and methods of traditional indigenous schools and the new primary schools modelled on western precedents.

This can, at best, be regarded only as a very poor representation of the problem. The first of these objectives stultifies the dignity of rural education and creates a position under which it will always be inferior to urban education—an assumption which a modern educationist cannot accept if he is to remain true to the democratic concept of equality of educational opportunity for all. The second objective is true in so far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. Finally, it is evident that the third objective has outlived its utility. The brief history of rural education in India, therefore, does not give us any valuable guidance in the matter and we shall now have to define the objectives in rural education *ab initio* after taking into consideration the educational practice of

countries which have a similar problem to face and after paying due heed to our ideas of reconstructing villages. As a basis of discussion in this respect therefore the following suggestions have been put forward.

The first and the foremost objective in rural education should be *the provision of equality of educational opportunity as between urban and rural areas*. India has rightly decided to become a democratic republic and to create a social order based on justice, freedom and equality. She is therefore committed to evolve a democratic system of education in which every child will be entitled to, and get the education which is in keeping with his capacity and aptitudes. This, in its turn, will imply the abolition of all the old privileges in education, viz., the privileges based on religion, race, colour, caste, or sex. But in the discussion of such privileges, it is often forgotten that the place of birth can constitute an important advantage or disadvantage in education at present. There is to-day a very wide gulf between the educational facilities provided in big urban centres on the one hand, and remote small villages on the other so that a child born in a city like Bombay has infinitely better chances of receiving education than a child born in, say, a small village in the forests of North Kanara. Consequently, birth in an urban area is equivalent to a privilege in education and a very important privilege at that. If our goal of a democratic republic is to be realised, we shall have to raise the status of rural education and extend it in such a way that there will be as complete an equality of educational opportunity between urban and rural children as it is humanly possible to achieve. In other words, we should be able to say that no child shall have its educational opportunities restricted on the mere ground that it is born in a rural area, and that the place of birth shall cease to be a privilege in education.

To realise this objective, attempts will have to be made in several directions. In the first place, steps will have to be taken to see that a school, however humble, is opened in every village or within an easily accessible distance from it. The term "School-less" village will have to be eliminated from our educational life and unless this is done, we shall not be able to provide compulsory primary education for all children or to say that we have been able to create equality of educational

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opportunity. Fortunately, the task is not so difficult. A large proportion of the villages which are school-less today have more than the minimum population required to make the establishment of a school financially feasible (this minimum population may be regarded as 300 or 400 so that the school will have an attendance of 40 children or so). In such cases, the only difficulty is financial and if the additional funds needed are made available it would be immediately possible to provide these villages with schools. The problem of the smaller villages is more difficult. Here, it is not possible to provide a separate school for each village, irrespective of the size of its population, because the employment of a teacher would not be financially justified (or even possible) on account of the small number of local children that could be expected to attend. Hence, experiments will have to be tried out to bring schools within the reach of these villages. For instance, two or more villages within a short distance of one another may be so grouped that a convenient central school could be provided for them. Half-time schools on the Australian model, *i.e.*, schools where the teacher works in one centre in the morning and another centre in the evening, or where he works for three days in another centre (leaving the seventh day a holiday) may be considered where a central school is not feasible.

Finally, even in cases where half-time schools are not feasible, experiments will have to be tried with the system of travelling teachers who move from one centre to another. Australia, more than any other country in the world, has done great work in providing education to the isolated small groups of children who live in its interior and has organised a system of "correspondence education" under which the State Education Department reaches even a solitary child living in a remote farmstead. Good work on the problem has also been done in Turkey where a promising local lad from such a village is selected, trained in a specially organised residential institution, and sent back to the village where he is provided with a farm and a small monthly stipend on condition that he conducts a school there. Some lead can also be obtained from Canada, U.S.A., Sweden and such other countries that have faced a similar problem successfully. Here is a challenge to our educational administration and a field in which there is great

scope for research and experiment. We must not only discover economic ways of providing a school for every village, however small, but must also evolve the curricular and teaching techniques appropriate to such expedients as half-time schools or travelling teachers. Ours is almost virgin soil in rural education and research workers may exploit it with advantage in the immediate future.

What is stated above applies only to primary schools, and if these suggestions are carried out, the necessary background for the provision of universal, compulsory and free primary education will have been created. But that is not enough. The existing facilities for secondary education in rural areas are poor by comparison with those in urban centres. The number of secondary schools in villages, as compared with the total rural population, is only a small fraction of a similar ratio for urban areas; attendance in rural secondary schools in proportion to rural population bears no comparison with that in urban areas. What is more, the variety of courses offered in urban secondary schools is much greater than that in rural ones. This inequality of provision materially affects the career of a superior rural child and prevents it from rising to those higher positions or entering into those important walks of life to which it is entitled on the basis of its capacity or to which an urban child of similar position would have found readier access. Very early steps will therefore have to be taken to provide equality of educational opportunity in secondary education as between urban and rural areas. To this end, careful surveys will have to be conducted to ascertain the extent and nature of the deficiencies in the existing provision of secondary education in rural areas. Here is another interesting subject for research in rural education. Then, as a secondary school cannot be provided in each village and as this facility will have to be enjoyed in common by a number of villages grouped together conveniently, careful and detailed plans will have to be prepared to locate the necessary number of secondary schools in appropriate centres in such a manner that every deserving rural child shall have easy access to a secondary school of the type suited to it. (Yet another interesting field for research, planning and experimentation.) Finally, more energetic action will have to be taken by the State to bring the required schools into existence.

Private enterprise has, for reasons already discussed, done wonders in providing secondary education in urban areas. But it obviously cannot be expected to play the same role in the poorer and apathetic rural areas where local talent useful for staffing secondary schools is not yet freely available. While therefore every advantage should be taken of such private enterprise as is forthcoming, the State must take greater initiative, and assume a larger responsibility than was possible in the past if the facilities for secondary education in rural areas are to be commensurate in the near future with those in urban areas.

In fact, it is necessary to go a step further and assert that the provision of secondary schools in rural areas should be even more generous, in proportion to the total rural population, than that in urban centres so that it would ordinarily be possible for a fairly large percentage of urban children to receive their secondary education in rural schools. To-day, thousands of rural children go to urban areas because adequate facilities in secondary education are not available in or near their villages. This is socially and educationally wrong and we are now all too familiar with the tragic tale of a promising rural lad who is removed to a city at a tender age to receive secondary education, is thereby exposed to all the temptations of city life, and comes to a bad end.

When, on the other hand, an urban child is educated in a rural secondary school, he stands to gain only by his contact with Nature and the simpler discipline of a rural way of life. If one were given the choice therefore one would certainly prefer to have a system in which large numbers of urban children were educated in rural surroundings than the existing arrangements under which thousands of rural children have to drift to urban areas to receive higher education. In fact, it would be a healthy principle to suggest that the provision of secondary education in urban areas should be restricted to the bulk of urban children, and to the few rural children who would come to cities for personal or family reasons or to take up courses for which no provision is made in rural secondary schools. On the other hand, the provision of secondary schools in rural areas should be generous and should aim at accommodating the large majority of rural children and a substantial proportion of urban children, too.

Equality of educational opportunity is not a purely quantitative concept and its demands are not met by the mere provision of an adequate number of primary and secondary schools and school places in urban and rural areas.

This has a qualitative aspect as well and demands that the standards of instruction maintained in urban and rural schools shall be as nearly equal as possible. That is not so at present and our rural schools of today are decidedly inferior to urban ones, for several reasons such as poorer buildings and equipment, less competent teachers, less close supervision and a more unfavourable cultural atmosphere.

This unhappy state of affairs must be ended at the earliest opportunity. Rural education may be different from urban, but it should not be inferior in quality. Here is another fundamental problem in rural education, viz., the ways and means of raising the status of rural education at the primary and secondary levels in such a way that it becomes as nearly equal to urban education as is humanly possible. This is a subject that calls for an immense amount of research and experiment.

What is true of primary and secondary education, is true of other aspects of education as well, that is, of adult education, vocational education, collegiate education. Our general objective therefore should be to plan things in such a way that the necessary number of schools and school places in all branches of education will be provided in rural areas and maintained in as high a state of efficiency as the corresponding institutions in urban areas. Where this is not possible, adequate scholarships should be provided to enable deserving but poor rural lads to join those courses in urban centres for which they have shown a capacity, but which cannot be economically provided in rural areas. Only when this is done shall the place of birth cease to be a privilege, and equality of educational opportunity be established between urban and rural centres at all rungs of the educational ladder.

The second objective in rural education should be *to co-ordinate rural reconstruction with rural education as intimately as possible*. The greatest problem in national development today is the reconstruction of the 600,000 villages in the country. The task is both important and urgent, not only for the

sake of the villages themselves, but for the destiny of India as a whole, for as the Radhakrishnan Commission has observed, "seldom has the greatness of a nation long survived the disintegration of its rural life"* . In this great work of rural reconstruction therefore the regenerated system of rural education will have to play a very significant role. Obviously this can happen only if rural education is rightly integrated with the wider and more general process of re-planning rural life.

How can this be done? It is easy to oversimplify the problem and to state that rural education should take, not only the initiative in, but also full responsibility for rural reconstruction. To say so, however, is to mis-read the relationship between education and social change. Education cannot, as Brubacher has pointed out, take the sole responsibility for creating a new social order. It only "completes and consolidates changes in social policy once they have been decided upon—whether by ballots or by bullets"†. The present disintegration of rural life is due to several causes—social, political and economic—among which the chief are : (1) the creation of a centralised system of administration; (2) the concentration of industry in towns and cities and the consequent impoverishment and exploitation of villages; (3) the exodus of almost all talent and capacity from rural to urban areas; and (4) the great difference created between the standard of living in urban and rural areas.

Unless major political and social decisions such as the adoption of a decentralised administrative pattern, the dispersal of industry to rural areas, the expenditure of large sums of money in villages to provide at least the minimum basic amenities of a civilised life are taken and implemented, it will not be possible for the rural school to fight the battle of reconstruction single-handed, and to undo the damage caused by the more powerful politico-economical forces. But assuming that these decisions are taken by the appropriate agencies of the Government, the system of rural education can step in to accelerate, complete, and consolidate the desired change. It will do so in a number of ways, some of which are briefly noticed here.

* Report p. 556.

† Modern Philosophies of Education, p. 195.

(a) The basic problem in rural reconstruction is *psychological*. Today, the average villager has become too fatalistic. He has no confidence in himself and does not believe that he can do anything to alter his environment. What is worse, he is very often so accustomed to his disintegrated and poor life that he does not wish for a change, and even opposes the very attempts to help him to raise his standard of life. Clearly he cannot be blamed for this attitude, because it is the result of the historical circumstances of the last 150 years during which the rural community was disintegrated under the influence of external forces too powerful to resist. It is true that, in recent years, some attempts have been made to destroy this fatalistic indifference of the villager to the intolerable conditions of his existence. But these efforts are generally political and hence not entirely constructive in kind. A proper system of rural education implies a constructive approach to the solution of the problem. It will destroy the fatalism, the inertia and the complacency of the average villager and create in him a "divine discontent" which will strive to remould the present sorry state of things into something nearer to the heart's desire. It will also give him the necessary self-confidence and make him feel that, to a large extent, he is the maker of his destiny. In other words, it will so change the outlook of the average villager that he will desire reconstruction on certain lines, know how to bring it about, and feel confident that he can achieve it through his own efforts. This is a psychological attitude midway between fatalistic indifference, on the one hand, and a blind revolutionary hatred, on the other.

(b) Secondly, the great task of rural reconstruction will need large man-power. In fact, in our existing conditions, man-power is our only asset and we shall have to devise a programme in which every person living in rural areas can make his contribution, however humble, to the cause. All citizens of rural areas, therefore, will have to be trained for rural reconstruction—the more capable ones for leadership and the others for intelligent initiation.

We must realise that we cannot reconstruct the villages by exporting social workers from the cities. The available social workers in cities are so few and the problems of urban areas themselves are so numerous that they will also have

enough to do in the towns and cities only. A few great and pioneer workers may decide to leave the cities, to scorn their delights, and to live laborious days in the midst of the villages. But they can never meet the total demand. It goes without saying that the personnel to carry out the several projects of rural reconstruction will have to be found in the villages. This implies firstly, the training of every individual in certain broad aspects of rural reconstruction; secondly, the selection of capable persons to play the role of leaders in all branches of the programmes; and thirdly the training of these selected persons for those more responsible tasks for which they have the capacity and aptitude. Unless these tasks are efficiently carried out, no programme of rural reconstruction can hope to succeed and it is obvious that only a properly organized system of rural education can carry them out thoroughly and quickly.

(c) Thirdly, there are several programmes of rural construction to which education is basic in that these programmes cannot be carried out satisfactorily unless they are preceded or accompanied by complementary educational activities. For instance, if we want to adopt cooperative methods in rural reconstruction, the task can be greatly eased by teaching co-operation well in rural schools. A child brought up in a primary school where agriculture is the basic craft is more likely to adopt improved methods of agriculture and to become a progressive farmer than another educated in a bookish school. Improvement in village sanitation and its continued maintenance is more easily possible if the village school gives a sound education in principles of public health and hygiene. The development of village industries would be more easily planned if children in rural schools were trained to work with their hands and to engage themselves in productive work. And so on. In other words, if rural schools are to build up attitudes and habits which are to be helpful in the task of rural reconstruction, many of them would be carried over to adult life; and on the basis of this large "carry-over" it would be possible to develop and stabilize a very practicable programme of rural reconstruction.

It is unnecessary to discuss the subject further. The few illustrations given above will show how problems of rural education and rural reconstruction are inter-dependent.

James Yenn said that, in an undeveloped area, education and reconstruction should go hand-in-hand, and that the best motto for planners was "to provide education through reconstruction." Any number of examples can be given to illustrate it. For instance, the education given in a primary school in public sanitation has almost always failed and has produced little or no effect upon the life of the community around it. This is mainly due to the fact that the instruction is given through a book and with the sole object of enabling the pupil to answer certain examination questions. In the same way, attempts made in certain *Ashrams* or rural service camps to clean the villages have failed. This is due to the fact that the work of cleaning is done by an outside agency—the volunteers in the camp or the *ashramites*—and because no adequate attempt is made to educate the village people in the principles of sanitation. The usual story of these experiments is that the village remains clean as long as the campers or *ashramites* do the cleaning, and that it relapses into its traditional dirt soon after this outside agency is withdrawn.

It will thus be seen that both the attempts have failed, the attempt to educate without the attempt to put the new knowledge to the test through practical efforts to reconstruct, as well as the attempt to reconstruct without trying to provide the needed complementary education. The conclusion is obvious : the relationship of education to social change is very complex because the two act and inter-act. Hence, the only attempt likely to succeed is the one which will integrate rural education with rural reconstruction and will seek "education through reconstruction and reconstruction through education".

The third objective in rural education is to *minimise the present large-scale exodus from the villages to the cities*. It is not claimed that this exodus should disappear altogether and that every child born in a rural area should stay in villages only. There will be several children from rural areas whose peculiar gifts and talents would make it necessary for them to go to cities. As the fundamental principle in education is to give full scope to the development of each personality, such children should be specially trained and encouraged to follow the calling of their choice in urban centres. Similarly, there would be a few persons in urban areas temperamentally averse to crowds and who yearn for

the comparative peace and beauty of Nature that one finds in rural areas. These will drift from towns to villages. But as a rule, it should be possible for the vast majority of children in rural areas to remain there and to find full scope for their capacities just as the vast majority of urban children should continue to live and work in an urban environment. At present this is not so. A large part of the rural population is just uprooted because it cannot be profitably employed in villages, and is cast on the urban centres where no provision is made to welcome it or to prepare for its arrival. In fact, the constant exodus of villagers to the cities resembles the refugee problem to a considerable extent, and has an adverse effect, not only upon the villages but upon the cities, too. As Tagore said, our cities have grown like "abscesses or tumours in the social body, rather than as muscular healthy growth" and have thereby created a malaise in every part of the organism. It is the task of rural education to put an end to this sorry state of affairs. It should try to reduce the present exodus to the cities to a minimum and should also endeavour to create a healthy urban-rural relationship*.

Re-organisation of Rural Education

If these objectives of rural education are to be realised, it follows that our system of rural education will have to be substantially differentiated from the urban in content and methods. Our existing system is not even urban. The British officials who shaped it in the past were actuated partly by the desire to imitate English precedents, and partly by the ambition to create a synthesis between Eastern and Western cultures. It is a hybrid product which is not suited even to our urban areas. Attempts will have to be made therefore to alter it considerably even in adapting it to urban conditions and it goes without saying that it cannot at all be adapted to rural areas without making extensive changes in it. This re-orientation of the educational system to our national needs in the first instance and later on, to urban and rural conditions, is the foremost task in the educational reconstruction of the day.

* The three objectives given above are those that, at present, specifically differentiate rural education from the urban, in theory as well as in practice. The general aims of education such as development of personality, preparation for adult life, etc. are common to all areas—whether urban or rural—and need not be discussed here.

How shall we set about it in so far as rural education is concerned? Several important lines of approach can be suggested and all of them will have to be pursued intensively and simultaneously if some worthwhile result is to be obtained in the near future. One of the simplest lines of enquiry—and one which should be taken up as early as possible—is to study the problem from the historical point of view. To begin with, the history of the past attempts to differentiate between urban and rural education may be carefully studied and published. This will give us an insight into the problem and enable us to plan our future work more carefully and with fewer chances of error. Some of the official attempts in this direction have already been noticed in an earlier section.

Quite an interesting group of official experiments in this line was carried out under the scheme of village improvement. This movement began in the early decades of the present century as a result of the pioneer work done by some great officials (among whom Mr. Brayne of the Punjab holds a prominent place) and was later on taken up by the Government on a national scale. Although the object of this movement was primarily to bring about a general improvement in village life and although it stressed agricultural development, educational activities formed an integral part of its programme and some spade-work for adapting the education in a village school to the broader purpose of rural reconstruction, was carried out under its aegis. That work has evidently grave limitations; but a student of history cannot afford to ignore it and it has a small but useful contribution to make to the study of the problem as a whole. Further, a good deal of work has been done in this field by missionaries. From the theoretical point of view, the missionary experiments have a better philosophic basis and they develop a subtler and more progressive technique than the schools under the village improvement scheme. Their work therefore has much greater value and is sure to provoke careful study. In fact, every student of rural education would do well, not only to study the abundant literature available on the subject, but also to examine some of the experiments made. There are also a few experiments conducted by Indian private enterprise. The experiment at Sriniketan was inspired by Rabindranath Tagore. There were some interesting experiments conducted as a part of the national education movement

and some good work has also been turned out by centres for village work started under the lead given by Mahatma Gandhi. If a careful study of these past experiments is made, valuable material for the planning of experiments in future would become readily available. Here, therefore, is an interesting field for research in rural education—a field which a historian can take up without delay and with hope of success.

Another interesting line of investigation would be to approach the problem from the comparative point of view. There are several nations of the world which have to face a similar rural problem, although nowhere else is the problem so acute or so difficult as in India. Many of them have done significant and original work in trying to solve their difficulties and in providing good education to their sparsely populated rural areas. India can learn much from their experience. For instance, Australia has achieved greater success than any other country in providing education to almost every child, however remotely situated. She has also done useful work in developing single-teacher schools. In both these activities therefore India can learn a good deal that can be of advantage to her. Similarly, U.S.A. also has a big rural problem to face (she is far more rural than she is generally believed to be. In some of her states, even the majority of the population lives in rural areas) and she has carried out excellent educational surveys of rural areas, produced considerable literature on various aspects of rural education, introduced interesting experiments like the consolidated school, and evolved good techniques for improving the efficiency of rural schools as well as for training more efficient teachers for them.

All this work has great utility for India. In Canada, too, the rural problem is the same as in the U.S.A. and work on similar lines has been done. Among European countries, the small village problem exists everywhere but particularly in Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland. Among Asian nations, the rural problem is acute in all countries and it is quite possible that India may get valuable guidance in the study of her rural problems through a careful study of what they have been able to do in this regard. In short, it would be worth our while to try to pool the world's experience in the field and to see what guidance we can get from it. The lead in

this matter must come from the Government of India who should institute a few fellowships for the purpose. People who have studied the problem and who have a clear idea of the Indian rural background and its problems, should be sent out to selected countries to report on the attempts made to tackle the problem and the mode in which India can utilize that experience in replanning her rural education. The total expenditure on this project may not come to much—a lakh or two for about ten to 15 fellowships would serve the purpose, but the money would be very well spent and the return to the country would be proportionately greater. Needless to say, every scholar should be required to submit a detailed report on his study and it should be published for general information.

Establishment of Research and Experimental Centres

The experience of other nations can doubtless give a useful lead but it has its own obvious limitations. A more powerful method of attack on the problem, therefore, would be to establish our own research and experimental centres in rural areas with the object of evolving newer and better techniques of rural education. Such centres should be located right in the heart of a rural area and they should be easily accessible from a group of villages. This point is important because there are important differences between one village and another so that the work in single village, however carefully selected, is not capable of generalisation to the countryside as a whole. Care has therefore to be taken to see that such centres develop activities, not only in the villages in which they are located, but also in a fairly large number of adjoining villages so that some work is done in every type of village. Secondly such centres should be staffed by a group of highly qualified persons who have been working or can work at the post-graduate level. This is quite essential because research and experiment would be the main activity of these centres. Today, such persons generally work in cities. They therefore have to be induced to go out to rural areas. This implies a sacrifice. On the other hand, it is necessary to provide them with good emoluments and reasonably good conditions of living at the rural centre in order that they should be able to work contentedly and put in their best effort. Thirdly, a complete set of all types of educational institutions that a rural area will need should be provided at each centre.

This would include (1) a pre-primary school; (2) a primary school; (3) a secondary school; (4) an adult community centre; (5) a special section to work among women; (6) a good library organisation; (7) sections of the needed vocational education; (8) a unit functioning at the university level; (9) teacher-training units at all levels—pre-primary, primary and secondary; and (10) a unit for training of social workers for rural areas*. All these institutions form the laboratory attached to the research and experimental centre and they would provide the staff of the centre with easy opportunities to experiment with new ideas and techniques. They should therefore be organised on the lines of the “demonstration schools” described by the Calcutta University Commission and the size of each institution should be strictly limited.

It goes without saying that the staff of these institutions also should be carefully selected and should be more highly qualified than that of ordinary schools because they have to conduct experimental work and assist in research. Each centre should be provided with an advisory committee of experts who will assist the staff in planning their experiments as well as with a small evaluation committee which will report on the work actually turned out from time to time. And finally, each centre should conduct a journal (or at least publish periodical reports) regarding the work done by it so that its experience becomes readily available to other workers in the field.

Such centres should be established in each district or region and ultimately their number would have to be so large that a group of four or five districts should have at least one such centre in their midst. But the beginning may be less ambitious and the scheme can be started by establishing at least one centre in each State or, when the State happens to be very big, by establishing one centre in each distinctive geographical or linguistic region. The First Five-year Plan has in this respect given a good lead. It includes a scheme for the establishment of such centres in different parts of the country and has also made the necessary financial provision for the purpose. According to the Plan, these centres are to be conducted by the State Governments and the expenditure involved is to be shared between the Centre and the State concerned in a fixed proportion.

*The list is merely indicative of the kind of thing required.

Several advantages would follow from the establishment of these centres. In the first place, they would bring highly trained academicians face to face with problems of rural education. No problem ever gets solved unless great minds capable of solving it are brought face to face with it. The trouble with rural education has been that it has never come face to face with the most competent of our educational workers. The only persons who have had to deal with rural education and its problems so far have been primary school teachers; and their general as well as professional education is so poor that they cannot be expected even to visualise or formulate the problems of rural education, let alone the question of solving them. It is only recently that matriculates have entered the field of primary education and have ceased to think it beneath their dignity to teach in a primary school. But they work generally in urban areas and the rural primary schools rarely have the good fortune to have a matriculate teacher. Graduates still think it beneath their dignity to teach in primary schools and professors at the post-graduate level do not touch primary education with a pair of tongs. They are urban in outlook and residence and want the villages to exist for them merely as places to read about in books or to visit occasionally on excursions to selected beauty-spots. This divorce between academic talent and rural education has been fatal and has stunted the growth of the latter. For the first time in the history of Indian education therefore these research and experimental centres will bring the best academic talent of the country close to its most baffling problem and the results will be far-reaching.

That this hope which embodies the second and the most important advantage of rural centres is neither misplaced nor over-optimistic, would be clear if we examine the general process through which any educational problem gets solved or through which the status of any type of education is raised. The first step in the process is that, either by accident or design, some capable minds are brought face to face with the issues that need solution. When they begin to grapple with the problems, their labours, whether successful or otherwise, soon begin to add to our knowledge. The issues are clearly formulated, tentative hypotheses are formed, and new methods and techniques to overcome difficulties or achieve better results are suggested. This "research" or its results are broadcast

through teacher-training institutions and generalised. It is, of course, quite possible to do so because, though it takes a really great mind to discover a new technique, the proved results of the discovery can be easily utilised by ordinary members of the profession.

This process obviously envisages the need of some men of high calibre who will labour at the solution of problems and make their results available to teachers to improve their efficiency. Some persons of this type are born and, driven by their inner urge, give a momentous lead, to their contemporary educational thought and practice. These are the great educators or educational reformers out of whose teachings the science and art of education is born and developed. But such geniuses have their own law—they come and go like meteors—and it would be wrong for any society to leave all educational progress to the providential appearance of such prophets. Every society which desires to retain its progressive character in education, therefore, must provide a regular machinery whereby (1) educational problems are taken, as they arise from time to time, to a well-desinged laboratory where competent persons are made to grapple with them and (2) the results of their labours are generalised through appropriate institutions for the good of the community in general and the use of the teaching profession in particular. Such a machinery provides a continuous and efficient method of internal reform without which no educational system can maintain its vitality for any length of time. In fact, it is the provision of this machinery that places educational reform on the sound footing of “design” or “plan” rather than on that of “change” or “accident”. The establishment of research and experimental centres, it will readily be granted, is just such a machinery, and there can be no doubt that it would contribute materially to the solution of the problems of rural education and to the raising of its general status.

As a corollary to the above, several other advantages will follow from these centres. They will help in awakening public opinion to the urgency and importance of the problem, and help in building up some educational thought about it. Their labours will produce plentifully the raw material out of which a regular science of rural education can be built up within a

few years. They will also train the personnel necessary to man the key posts in the administration of rural education and to conduct experimental educational institutions in rural areas. In short, it is difficult to think of any single agency, other than these research and experimental centres which would have so great an influence on the development of rural education in this country.

CHAPTER III

Administrative Problems

It is necessary to refer to some important issues connected with the administration of these centres. To begin with, we may consider the question regarding the agency to conduct these centres. Naturally, the largest number of these centres will have to be conducted by the State Government and will therefore be under the control and management of the Education Departments. But in the interest of the cause, it is essential that some centres should be conducted by the Universities and private bodies as well. Each of these agencies has a distinct advantage of its own. The Universities, for instance, can bring much high academic talent to bear on the problem, and this will specially be so with those universities that have well developed Education Departments of their own. Similarly, private bodies can harness the enthusiasm of self-sacrificing and devoted workers to a much larger extent than either the universities or the State Departments of Education. They can also establish a closer and more intimate relationship with the rural public. The cause of rural education will be helped better if research and experimental centres are conducted by all three agencies—Universities, Education Departments and private bodies—so that each agency can make its own unique contribution to the ultimate solution of the problem.

The second problem refers to the selection of the personnel to man the first centres that are established in the immediate future. Where and how are we to get competent personnel to remain in charge of these pioneer centres? Ten years hence, this will cease to be a difficulty. By that time much valuable literature on the subject will have been produced by these centres. Special degree or diploma courses in rural education will be conducted by the Universities or Education Departments. It should also be possible to arrange for the practical training of selected persons in one or the other of these centres. And several persons who have either worked in or been educated at these centres should be available for service if new centres are to be opened.

Under these conditions, it will be possible to obtain easily the services of persons who have taken a special degree or diploma in rural education and have also had some practical experience of the work at one of the rural centres. But to-day none of these conditions exist. There is hardly any original literature available on the problem. No university conducts a degree or a diploma course in rural education. And as no such centres exist, there are no opportunities for training academically qualified persons in practical aspects of the work. Under such circumstances, it is not easy to select the few workers who are required to man the centres to be opened in the immediate future.

A beginning must, however, be made and it has to be made with such material as already exists. It is therefore suggested that the persons to hold keyposts at the centres to be opened in the near future should possess the following qualifications, as far as possible :

- (a) they should have had general and professional education up to the Master's Degree in Education. This will guarantee that they have the adequate general background in educational problems;
- (b) they should also have a research degree (preferably in education) so that they can be expected to be conversant with general research techniques and methods;
- (c) experience in conducting a research centre or an educational experiment is desirable, but need not be made an essential condition;
- (d) previous experience in rural education or the holding of a diploma or degree in rural education cannot be expected. Hence stress should be laid on the requisite temperamental qualities and zeal for such work. Persons who have an enthusiastic conviction that the problems of rural education are most important, persons who are prepared to devote their life to the study of rural education and persons who can temperamentally adapt themselves to rural ways of living should be selected and allowed to train themselves through their work.

The importance of making a good choice of the workers to man the pioneer centres cannot be overemphasized. On them will depend the whole future of the movement. The

greatest care should therefore be taken in selecting persons to work in the centres that are now being opened. The task is difficult but it is not impossible to find, among our educational workers today, the few really capable persons who can run these centres.

The third problem refers to financial arrangements. It must be understood clearly that financial arrangements for these centres must be made liberally and on a long-term basis. Research is necessarily costly and it always takes time to get worthwhile results through it. By far the best way to run research is to dictate it to conform to a pattern or to produce certain results within a given time. Hence the directors of these centres must be given a free hand in their conduct and the purse-strings should be deliberately held a little loose. It must also be understood that the cost of conducting these centres will be comparatively high, because the staff required will have to be greater in number and more highly qualified than in the ordinary educational institutions. Hence, the State must make a more liberal provision in its budget for these centres and also give comparatively liberal assistance to those that are conducted by private bodies.

The fourth problem is coordination. It is extremely desirable to coordinate the activities of these centres with one another so that the repetition of mistakes is avoided and the workers in one centre can benefit by the experience of those in others. To this end, it would be necessary to convene a seminar on rural education at the national level. It should be organised by the Government of India; and to the first seminar persons who have made a close study of the problem should be invited. Naturally, the major problem to be discussed at the first seminar would be the organisation of these research and experimental centres. The seminar should thus become an annual affair. It should meet, as far as possible, at one of these centres and should last for at least a week. Workers from each centre and educationists and administrators interested in the problem should be invited to it and the problems of rural education in general should be discussed in the light of the experience obtained at various centres. Such seminars would have great use as a clearing house of ideas on the problem and would contribute materially to the development of each centre as well as to a quicker and better study of rural education.

Some indication may be given here of the type of problems on which these centres will have to work. For instance, they may be required:

(a) to hold surveys of rural areas with a view to discovering the deficiencies in the existing educational provision;

(b) to hold surveys of rural areas with a view to deciding the type of education needed for them (*e.g.* the selection of crafts to be taught, the industrial sections to be attached to local schools, etc.);

(c) to study survivals of the old indigenous pattern of rural culture with a view to perpetuating those aspects of the traditional rural culture which need to be conserved and perpetuated;

(d) to survey all aspects of rural life with a view to deciding those forms and patterns that need development, those that need correction, and those that need elimination;

(e) to experiment with every possible activity that is naturally available for adoption by the rural schools and to evolve techniques to exploit its educational potentialities to the full;

(f) to evolve techniques for correlating the teaching of various subjects with the local environment;

(g) to evolve new curricula at all levels—primary, secondary, adult, etc.—suitable for rural needs and requirements;

(h) to evolve new combinations of holidays and vacations to suit the different types of climatic and economic conditions ordinarily met within the locality;

(i) to investigate into the different types of child-labour current in the locality and to evolve practical plans under which, on the one hand, the existing conditions of child-labour would be improved as far as possible and on the other, the educational system would be so adjusted that a child is enabled to attend the school without serious interference with his work at home;

(j) to enquire into the interests, common pursuits, aptitudes, etc. of rural adults and adolescents and to evolve improved techniques for adult continuation—education in rural areas;

(k) to produce the special literature that rural educational institutions may need;

(l) to evolve new methods of teaching at all levels in conformity with local environment;

(m) to discover new techniques for the training of workers for rural schools;

(n) to plan new courses or new alternatives of existing courses with a view to creating those types of workers who will be needed for the programme of rural reconstruction;

(o) to enquire into the existing conditions of important backward groups in rural areas such as women, Harijans, etc., and to experiment with various methods of ameliorating their condition;

(p) to standardise intelligence, aptitude, or other tests on rural children;

(q) to attempt to correlate the work of educational institutions with that of rural reconstruction; and so on.

The above list is merely introductory and there are hundreds of other problems that need early investigation at these centres. But it is hardly necessary to prolong this list, although it can be increased several fold without much difficulty. It is a common experience that every piece of research leaves more questions unanswered at the end than there were at the beginning. The paradoxical position is due to the fact that each piece of research, while solving some problem or problems, also brings into focus some other problems or aspects of the problem which were not clearly recognised in the past. Hence, the nature of the research work to be done at these centres will be clearer, as the work itself develops and it is not necessary to prepare very comprehensive lists of research problems at the very outset. About half a dozen problems is all that a research centre will need to begin with and the rest will take care of itself as the work of the centre begins to develop.

One point more. Throughout the foregoing discussion these centres have been described under the colourless and even cumbrous designation of "research and experimental centres in rural education" and no attempt has been made to coin any attractive or appealing name for them. The term "rural universities" could have been used but has been

deliberately avoided. This was due to two considerations. Firstly, to avoid the controversy on the problem, viz., whether new institutions called "rural universities" should be established or whether rural sections or bias should be developed in existing universities. Secondly, it goes without saying that many of these centres will have a modest beginning and will take some years to reach their full height. They may therefore begin as universities and work downwards or, alternatively, begin as small research and experimental centres and gradually rise to such a status that the conferring of a university status upon them would be inevitable.

Of these two methods, the first is pompous, costly and even risky because some of these centres may fail to develop as anticipated. The second is simpler and more economical. It was therefore presumed that these experiments should begin as "research centres in rural education" and slowly develop to their full status, and that the status of a rural university be conferred on them in due course, if and when they qualified themselves for it by the ability of their personnel and the quality and quantity of their work. Be that as it may, these centres could certainly be regarded as pilot projects for a rural university and some of them, at any rate, should develop into rural universities at no distant date.

Enough has been said in the preceding paragraphs regarding the need to establish research and experimental centres in rural education, the advantages that would follow from their establishment, and the special measures that will have to be adopted to establish the earliest centres as well as to enable them to function successfully. The point need not be considered in greater detail at this stage and the discussion might be closed with the statement that the highest priority and attention should be given to these centres in the programmes of educational reconstruction proposed to be undertaken by State Governments. On them depends the future of our rural education and, ultimately, the future of Indian education itself.

APPENDIX I

Experimental Schools in Rural Education

The number of the research centres in rural education described in the preceding sections will be necessarily limited, partly because of the difficulty of getting suitable personnel and partly because of financial considerations. But these limitations do not apply to humbler experiments in rural education which have a significant role to play in the study of the problem. For instance, small and easily manageable projects may be undertaken to conduct one or more experimental educational institutions in rural areas. An experimental primary school only may be conducted in one place; a similar secondary school or a training college may be conducted in another, and so on. Alternatively, two or more such institutions could be conducted jointly, though this is never so comprehensive as those connected with full-fledged research centres. It is essential to encourage such experiments. They are simpler to organise; they need fewer qualified persons to conduct them and even one suitable person may be enough to start a single experimental institution. They are also less costly. Consequently, it is possible to develop a fairly large number of such centres in the immediate future without much difficulty, either of finance or of personnel. It is true that the work of each individual centre will be small; but as their number will be larger, the sum-total of their contribution to the study of the problem would be far from negligible. It is therefore suggested that the work of a few central and full-fledged research centres in each area should be supplemented, as far as possible, by the establishment of a network of smaller experimental centres (having one, or at the most, a small group of institutions). Private or non-governmental enterprise is particularly suitable in this field and should be encouraged by a liberal system of grants-in-aid.

- N.B. (1) *It was felt that the details of the organisation of Shri Mouni Vidyapeeth—a research and experimental centre of the type envisaged above—would be of some interest to students of the problem. These have therefore been given in Appendix II.*
- (2) *A short note on “experimental schools” which provide a more modest approach to this problem is given in Appendix I.*

APPENDIX II

Shri Mouni Vidyapeeth

A Research and Experimental Centre in Rural Education

Shri Mouni Vidyapeeth was established in April 1952, at Gargoti, a village in the district of Kolhapur in Bombay State. It is a research and experimental centre located right in the midst of a purely agricultural and rural community. It has been staffed by enthusiastic workers who are qualified to work at the post-graduate level but have dedicated their life to improving the condition of rural education. It, therefore, creates a situation where qualified and living minds are brought face to face with the problems inherent in the education of a poor, rural and agricultural area. It provides against the damping of the initial enthusiasm of workers partly by enabling them to work in a group and partly by maintaining continuous contacts between them and other workers and institutions functioning in urban centres. The experiment, therefore, makes it possible to launch a comprehensive attack on the problems of rural education and promises to be a laboratory through which newer and more efficient techniques of educating the rural public can be evolved and broadcast.

2. Objectives :—This experiment in rural education has five objectives, viz.,

- (i) to attempt a reconstruction of the life of the people living in the region served by the Vidyapeeth ;
- (ii) to conduct educational and other institutions within the region, partly to bring about such reconstruction and partly to evolve educational techniques suitable for rural areas ;
- (iii) to train primary teachers, social workers and other leaders required for the reconstruction of rural life ;
- (iv) to conduct experiments and research in rural reconstruction in general and rural education in particular ; and
- (v) to publicise the findings of such research and experiments as well as of those conducted elsewhere with the same objectives.

3. Location :—In an experiment of this type, the most careful consideration has to be given to the selection of the site. The Mouni Vidyapeeth was, therefore, located at Gargoti after a detailed examination of every aspect of the problem and after a number of alternative locations had been fully scrutinised. In the first place, the site is easily accessible from Kolhapur by three routes; the shortest of these is the Kolhapur-Gargoti Road (31 miles) but unfortunately, it is closed in the monsoons as there is no bridge on the Dudhaganga

River. When this happens, Gargoti can be reached by either of the two alternative routes, viz., (1) The Kolhapur-Gargoti route via Gaibi Ghat (distance 47 miles) and (2) The Kolhapur-Gargoti route via Nipani (distance 50 miles). Secondly, Gargoti is situated right in the heart of a rural area and lies far out of any suburban belts. The usual flaw in the sites selected on the ground of accessibility is that they fall within the suburban belt of some city or town and, therefore, fail to be rural in the full sense of the term. The nearest city from Gargoti is Kolhapur whose suburban belt has a radius of eight to ten miles only; and the nearest town is Nipani which has a suburban belt of about five or six miles radius but is situated at a distance of 25 miles from Gargoti. It will, therefore, be seen that the environment of Gargoti is perfectly rural and that its easy accessibility does not make it a suburb of any city or town. Not only is this so at present but there is not even a remote possibility of Gargoti ever developing a suburban character. Thirdly, the whole of the region is completely agricultural and there is no possibility of any large industry being developed in it. Gargoti, therefore, will always remain a village and the predominantly agricultural character of the region is not likely to be altered at any time. Fourthly, Gargoti is situated at a strategic point within the region. It lies on the main road which opens out of Vedaganga Valley—the Gargoti-Patgaon road of 22 miles—and is located at the point where the valley just begins to open out into wide and fairly level plains. The small villages of the valley proper which are situated in the forest or semi-forest tracts of the Sahyadri Range are, therefore, easily approachable from Gargoti. Moreover, within a radius of five to seven miles from Gargoti, there are 34 villages (with a total population of about 30,000) which are easily accessible from Gargoti and which cannot be controlled so easily from any other centre. Gargoti, therefore, is a strategic centre from which attempts to reconstruct the region as a whole can be easily spread out. Fifthly, Gargoti is the headquarters of a *taluka*. A *taluka* treasury, a medical dispensary, a Veterinary Dispensary, a good Public Library whose history goes back to more than 75 years, and such other institutions are already functioning at the place. With their help and on the basis of the administrative advantages that a *Taluka* headquarter place can always provide, it is much easier to build up a rural reconstruction and educational centre at Gargoti than at any other place in the region. Sixthly, the site of the Vidyapeeth is of exquisite natural beauty. It is situated on a hill-top on the bank of the Vedaganga River and is surrounded, on three sides, by lofty evergreen hills. The educational institutions located here, therefore, can offer to their students all the advantages of a continual communion with Nature, and the elevating influence of beautiful natural surroundings. Finally, Gargoti has great historical traditions and associations. The river flowing nearby is called the Vedaganga, because, in ancient times, several sages had built their *Ashrams* on its banks for the study and teaching of the Sacred Texts. It is also said that the sage Gargya had his *Ashram* here and that the original name of the place was *Gargya-Kuti* (the hermitage of sage Gargya) which has since been corrupted into Gargoti. Within five miles of the place and easily visible from it is the fort of Bhudargad

which has played a memorable part in Maratha history. The great Shivaji twice passed through Gargoti when he went to seek the blessings of Shri Mouni Maharaj, a great sage who lived at Patgaon, a hilly resort at a distance of 22 miles from Gargoti. This sage (after whom the Vidyapeeth is named) was called "Mouni" Maharaj, because he had taken a vow of silence. He was so well known for his saintliness that Shivaji deliberately went to see him before starting on *Dakshina digvijaya* or the conquest of the South and felt confident of victory when he had obtained the saint's blessings. These historical traditions naturally lend a great piquancy to the present experiment. All these weighty reasons can give some idea of the advantages of the site and the propriety of locating the experiment at Gargoti.

4. Educational Institutions:—Ultimately, the following institutions will be located at the Vidyapeeth :—

- (1) a pre-primary section ;
- (2) a full-grade primary school for boys and girls ;
- (3) a high school teaching agriculture and some cottage industries ;
- (4) a primary teachers' training college with agriculture as the main craft ;
- (5) a model agricultural farm which will serve as a *Taluka* Demonstration Centre, and as a practising farm for the primary school, high school, and training college ;
- (6) a centre for training rural social workers ;
- (7) a good library on rural education and rural reconstruction.
- (8) a post-graduate research centre for rural education and rural reconstruction ;
- (9) a Publication Department for the issue of books, pamphlets, journals, etc., on the subject of rural reconstruction in general and rural education in particular ; and
- (10) a *Janata* College.

It was not possible to start all these institutions at once, due partly to lack of personnel and partly to paucity of funds. But in order that every step taken might fit in properly in the ultimate plan, an extensive site of 25 acres has been acquired *ab initio* and the location of all these ten institutions has been carefully planned on it and a beginning has been made, with some of them. The central point in the Plan is a huge playground of the dimensions of the Brabourne Stadium in Bombay, located at the highest point on the hill and the different educational institutions have been situated all round it. On one side, a primary school building has already been constructed by the District Local Board at a cost of about Rs. 69,000. It has also undertaken a scheme to provide water supply to the site. On another side, the Devasthan Mandal has constructed a fine temple which can also be used as an Assembly Hall or a theatre with a good stage or as a building for the *Janata* College. On the third side, the foundations

of a building which will ultimately house the training college, the high school and some other institutions have been laid. A separate area has been reserved for the residency and the buildings connected with the model farm. In short, the site for every educational institution that is proposed to be started has been specifically earmarked and a good start to put the whole plan in action has already been made.

It is too early at this stage to describe the detailed organisation and working of each of the ten institutions that are proposed to be located on the site of the Vidyapeeth. It is only when these institutions actually begin to function and develop for a few years that the exact nature of their organisation will become known; and workers on the spot will have to be given full discretion to experiment and to cut new paths in the search for a pattern which will be most useful to the rural public. All that can be done at this stage, therefore, is to indicate a few broad lines along which each of these institutions is proposed to be developed. The following brief notes will be useful from this point of view :

(1) **The Pre-Primary Section** :—This will begin to function as a small nursery school for children between three and six years of age. It would gradually be expanded by the addition of a child-welfare centre and would finally be developed into a training centre for pre-primary teachers in rural areas.

(2) **Primary School** :—This will be used mainly as a practising school of the Training college and will develop agriculture as the principal craft. It is proposed to place a trained graduate at the head of this institution in order to improve its tone and to use it as an experimental school for developing new methods of teaching, trying different modifications in the curriculum and for evolving techniques for the integration of the Primary school with the life of the community around. Further attempts will be made to co-ordinate the working of this school with that of other primary schools in the region by holding periodical conferences of primary teachers in order to acquaint them with the newer techniques evolved at the school, by arranging demonstration lessons, by periodical visits to neighbouring schools to supervise their working and to demonstrate the newer techniques *in situ* and by organising inter-school sports, debates and dramatics. Special attempts will be made to bring every child of the school age in Gargoti under instruction and to evolve suitable methods for making compulsory education effective in practice.

(3) **High School** :—This will contain only the upper standards, namely, standards VIII, IX, X and XI. Agriculture will be a compulsory subject in the curriculum. As a sufficient number of students will not be available from Gargoti itself and as it is essential to extend the benefits of this institution to other villages in the region, a hostel is proposed to be attached to this institution. Even the students from Gargoti itself will be encouraged to spend as much time as possible on the premises of the Vidyapeeth itself.

The problem of ascertaining the exact type of secondary education which will be most useful for rural areas has not been squarely faced as yet. It is, therefore, proposed to devise new curricula and courses which will be in keeping with rural conditions and train leaders for rural life. As it is not likely that such courses will soon find a place in the S.S.C. Syllabus, the Vidyapeeth will issue its own certificates of proficiency in the initial stages, with the approval of the Department, if possible. In other words the work done in the High school will be twofold: on the one side, students will be trained for the S.S.C. Examination with agriculture as one of the subjects of study. On the other, experimental work will also be carried on for evolving suitable practical courses for those who do not want to proceed to the S.S.C. Examination but desire instead to follow some vocation of rural life.

(4) **Primary Teachers' Training College** :—When fully developed, this institution will have two divisions and will have 80 teachers under training. It will provide instruction in agriculture as a basic craft.

Even in its routine aspect as an institution for training teachers according to the Departmental plan, the College will have the unique advantage of training teachers in the environment very similar to that in which they will be called upon to work at a later date. But it is not the intention to restrict the activities of the College to mere routine and an attempt will be made to raise the standards of teacher-training by roping in the cooperation of the other institutions conducted at the Vidyapeeth. This will be facilitated by the Post-graduate section which will do research in the problems of primary education and by the experimental work done at the practising school in collaboration with the other primary schools in the region. The work at the Janata College will also enable the trainees to understand the problem of adult education in rural areas and will give them practical and valuable training in the methods of making the school as the centre of community life. Besides the residential life of two years as in an educational community of teachers and students, the communion with Nature in its beautiful aspects which the Vidyapeeth site provides and the intimate contact with several activities of rural reconstruction and education that will be continuously going on at the centre are expected to give the trainees that education of personality which is far more worth while than the usual mechanical drill in a few well known tricks of the trade. It is also proposed to experiment with different methods of giving teaching practice and to utilise the services of the trainees in organising educational and allied programmes in Gargoti and neighbouring villages.

(5) **Model Agricultural Farm** :—The Vidyapeeth has about 15 acres of land which can be used for the purposes of an agricultural farm. This will primarily be used by the Practising school, the High school and the Training college. But it is also proposed to utilise a part of it as a *Taluka* Demonstration Centre attached to the *Janata*

college. If the land already in possession of the Vidyapeeth is found inadequate for the purpose, the necessary land will be taken on lease from the adjoining landlords.

Connected with this farm, it is proposed to organise an Extension Service to the villages in the region with the object of acquainting the villagers with improved agricultural techniques and assisting them to organise themselves on cooperative lines in order to obtain the use and advantage of such techniques.

(6) Library :—The Shahu Vachanalaya, Gargoti, which is an active institution with very old traditions has agreed to affiliate itself to the Vidyapeeth. This library was established in 1876 and is already aided by Government as a *Taluka* Library. It is proposed to develop it to meet the needs of the Vidyapeeth rather than to start the building up of a new library *ab initio*. As finally developed, this library will have :—

- (a) a section of English books meant for Post-graduate research workers and members of the staff ;
- (b) a section of Marathi books for Training college students ;
- (c) a section of Marathi and English books for students of the High school ;
- (d) a section of children's books for the Primary school ;
- (e) a section of books for the adult rural population of the region ; and
- (f) a section of Hindi books.

N.B.—Sections (d) and (e) will have circulating branches meant for the other villages in the region.

(7) The Post-graduate Research Centre :—This section will be affiliated to the Poona University and train students for the M.Ed. and Ph.D. degrees of that University. It has been named Shri Govind-rao Korgaonkar Institute of Rural Education. The main idea underlying the organisation of this section is to take project after project for research in rural education. Some of the problems that are proposed to be tackled are :—

- (a) The problems of truancy and attendance ;
- (b) Rural school surveys ;
- (c) Experimental work on single-teacher schools ;
- (d) The problems of wastage and stagnation ;
- (e) Parental attitudes and education in rural areas, etc., etc. ;
- (f) Reform of the existing system of examinations.

As a distinct part of this section, it is proposed to start a Secondary Training College affiliated to the Poona University. The existing course for the B.T. Degree is mainly intended for secondary teachers and there is no properly designed training course for those who want to become inspecting officers of primary schools or work on the staff of Primary Training Colleges. A special course for this purpose is proposed to be prepared and conducted under the auspices of this Vidyapeeth.

(8) **The Janata College :—**This will be organised on the lines of the Linton Village College combined with work on the lines of the Antigonish Movement. It will mainly be an institution to help the adult population of the village to enrich their life culturally, socially and financially.

(9) **Training Centre for Rural Social Workers :—**Some attempts have been made so far to organise the training of social workers in urban areas but the problem of rural social work has not been studied at all. It is, therefore, proposed to break new ground and to conduct well-planned courses for training social workers for rural areas. The trainees will ordinarily be selected from amongst the promising young persons actually living in rural areas and the course of training will be so designed as to help them to make their own lives better and side by side, to work for the improvement of the area in which they live.

(10) **Publication Department :—**It is proposed to build up a Publication Department to give publicity to the work and findings of the Vidyapeeth.

Some important considerations emerge from this planning of the educational institutions. The first is the comprehensive character of the plan. If education is defined as a life-long process of the development of body, mind and spirit, the Vidyapeeth may be said to provide complete education for the people of rural areas from the pre-primary to the post-graduate stage. The second consideration is the economy that results from such comprehensive planning. It will easily be seen that the work of each institution helps that of several others and it will readily be granted that, taken together, these ten institutions will cost much less than they would have done if each of them had been planned in isolation. The third is the totality of effect that the concentration of all these institutions on a single spot and under the control of one authority will give to the experiment so that it becomes a really powerful instrument to rebuild the life of the region as a whole. The fourth is the *dual* role of the Vidyapeeth which integrates the school with the community, viz., not only will the people come to the Vidyapeeth, but the Vidyapeeth will go to the people to assist them. And the fifth is the experimental and pioneer value of such a plan that will act as a pilot scheme for the reconstruction of rural education in general and the creation of rural universities in particular. When fully developed, it will be a single faculty Rural University.

ENCLOSURE

Fundamental Principles of Shri Mouni Vidyapeeth

1. The Vidyapeeth has been named after Shri Mouni Maharaj with a view to focussing attention on the fundamental principle that emanates from the life of this great saint; *Mounam* or silence is symbolic of peace. Peace is possible only when men realise the basic equality of all human beings and create a Social Order devoid of all forms of exploitation. Hence the motto of the Vidyapeeth—शांतोऽयमात्मा ।

This peace can be attained in three ways : through ज्ञान or the true knowledge of reality ; through त्याग or service ; and through सेवा or sacrifice. These three words have, therefore, been included in the motto of the Vidyapeeth ; and they imply that the staff of the Vidyapeeth shall try to live a life of sacrifice, of unceasing pursuit of knowledge, and of unflinching devotion to the service of the rural community. It shall also be the aim of the Vidyapeeth to inculcate these high ideals into the life of its students by establishing an intimate contact between the teachers, pupils and the community and through properly organised programmes of formal instruction, work and activities.

2. The Vidyapeeth is located in rural area and tries to serve the educational needs of a rural community. It, therefore, seeks to emphasize that India lives in villages, that the problem of Indian education is virtually a problem of rural education, and that research and experimentation in rural education need the highest priority in our schemes of educational reconstruction.

3. In choosing the best site in the village for the Vidyapeeth and in constructing the best buildings for its institutions, it is the intention to create a tradition under which the best site in every place would be assigned to the school and every school would be the best building in the locality.

4. In locating all educational institutions from the pre-primary to the post-graduate stage on one campus and under the control of one officer, the Vidyapeeth seeks to bridge over the wide and harmful gulfs that have now arisen between the so-called "higher" and "lower" stages of education.

5. It will be a rule at the Vidyapeeth that every member of the staff should try to participate in the work of every institution, unless his lack of academic qualifications comes in the way. An attempt will thus be made to remove the sharp distinctions that have now grown up between professors, secondary teachers and primary teachers.

6. Every member of the staff of the Vidyapeeth is expected to devote some time every day to voluntary social service outside his routine work. Moreover, the work of the Vidyapeeth will be so organised that every student will have plenty of opportunity to perform voluntary social service of some type or other. An attempt will thus be made to create a situation where every individual connected with the Vidyapeeth would deem it his duty to engage himself in some social service to the community.

7. The utmost emphasis will be placed on creating a democratic way of life at the Vidyapeeth both at the staff and the student level.

8. The Vidyapeeth discourages undue emphasis on book-learning and attempts to create a new way of life suited to rural conditions.

9. The Vidyapeeth stands for a regeneration of rural life in India through a proper system of education. Its most important objective is to experiment for the discovery of the educational methods and techniques which will bring about such regeneration in the shortest time possible, to give wide publicity to such methods and techniques and to train teachers and other social workers in using them.

10. The Vidyapeeth is free from any set ideology and believes that an educational experiment will be creative only in so far as it retains the freedom to borrow good things from anywhere and even to venture out into fresh paths that no one might have attempted in the past.



Officer